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REV. MR. TENNEY'S SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

MRS. MARTHA LEE.

PREACHED AT MANCHESTER, MASS.

MAY 6TH, 1860.

CHRIST TO LIVE: GAIN TO DIE.

A

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BY REV. F. V. TENNEY,

PASTOR OF THE ORTHODOX CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

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This discourse, prepared under the pressure of the multiplied demands of an unusually busy week, is given to the press only at the solicitation of the friends of the beloved saint, whose virtues it commemorates. The circumstances gave it an interest to them beyond its merits; and their request must be the writer's apology for its publication.

A SERMON.

“To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” — PHILIPPIANS 1 : 21.

It is a distinguishing feature of true christianity that it embraces the present and the future states, as parts of one life devoted to God. This life is not, indeed, uniform in the measure of its development — not precisely the same in its circumstances, for any two successive periods, however short ; but progressive from its commencement through eternity. Yet it is one life, and identical as to the principles which underlie and support it, and which constitute its essence.

Except so far as true religion exerts its influence over the minds of men, they are accustomed to confine their thoughts to their present earthly state of existence. They busy themselves from day to day, in making their condition here as comfortable as it may be. Many even live as if they were to continue here forever, and were content to do so ; or, if they look beyond, it is with exceedingly vague and unsatisfactory views. They imagine that their future state will be composed of elements of happiness or of unhappiness, like those which enter into their present experience ; or they are bewildered by their thoughts, and confess to themselves their ignorance, and, perhaps, to a great extent, their indifference, respecting what will be their future condition.

The gospel alone furnishes us with a proper view of the nature and the great end of our being, both here and hereafter. Christ hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, and only they who have learned of Him, and who are His sincere and earnest disciples, *truly live*. Theirs is genuine christian experience. There are many counterfeits of it; but that which will be confirmed and approved of the Judge, in the revelations of the great day, will have the stamp of *Christ* upon it, as the symbol of its genuineness, its oneness, its permanency, its glory.

We have in the apostle Paul a striking example of this experience. He had no definite knowledge of it until his heart was changed by the mighty power of God, while in the midst of his mad and sinful career as a persecutor of Christ's church. But when he was impelled from the promptings of his new nature to inquire, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and when the scales had fallen from his eyes, and he had vision of spiritual and divine things, then his past life appeared to him in a different light from what it had ever done before, and he began to realize the purpose for which God had given him his being. He began to see that "the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." But it was not until a considerable time subsequent, when he had passed through many vicissitudes, and arrived at a maturity of christian experience, when he was approximating to the end of his earthly course, that he made the bold testimony of our text, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

This evidently was the language of strong christian faith. He saw what his position was as a disciple and an apostle of Jesus Christ. There was but one great object to be accomplished; he hoped and expected by divine grace to fulfil it. It was comparatively a matter of indifference to him personally, where or how it was to be accomplished, provided that by all means, in all places, and at all times, Christ might be magnified by him. He was willing to live—he was willing to die. The latter, for his own sake, he preferred rather. But if he could better subserve the great design of his Master, by toiling and suffering on

in the work of the ministry, to which he had been specially appointed, he was willing to do so. He was in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ; nevertheless, as he saw that it was more needful for his fellow christians, and particularly the Philippians, whom he was addressing, that he should abide in the flesh, he declared with confidence, "I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith." But his earnest expectation and hope was, that in nothing he should be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death. As to the prolongation of his earthly sojourn, he would cheerfully leave that to God. It only concerned him to follow his Master's directions, and wait for the farther development of His will; and this he would do, in life and in death, standing by and maintaining his principles to the last. Thus, as confirmatory and comprehensive of all these principles, in one short sentence—that of our text—he makes a full and explicit confession of his faith: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain;" or, as the margin reads, "For Christ is my gain in life and in death;" his meaning being, as I think, While I shall alike be a sweet savor to Christ, and it will be infinite gain to me whether I live or die, yet I cannot but rather desire the latter, in itself considered, as introducing me to a higher and more glorious state than it is possible for me to be in, so long as I am in the flesh.

It is true that all christians do not enter fully into this experience of the apostle Paul, so that they can respond to the sentiments he has expressed in such strong and emphatic terms; and yet they have substantially the same experience. Many may be able to say, with a pious Scotch minister, who, being asked by a friend, during his last sickness, whether he supposed he was dying, replied, "Really, I care not whether I am or not; for if I die, I shall be with God; if I live, he will be with me." If they are not able to affirm with confidence like that of the apostle, "To *me* to live is Christ, and to die is gain," it may, nevertheless, be *true* of them, and *is* true of them, every one.

Partly that this may be made to appear, and that all among

us who have really chosen Christ as our Friend and Savior, whatever our attainments in the divine life, may be encouraged, stimulated, and comforted on our way, and be ready for whatsoever awaits us in the future, I would invite you to enter with me somewhat into an analysis of this record of Christian experience.

1. We first inquire, then, what are we to consider as implied in the declaration, "To me to live is Christ?" or in what sense is it Christ for the christian to live?

It may be observed here, that our text sounds like an echo of the saying of Christ, "Because I live, ye shall live also." It is also like the testimony of the apostle John: "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life."

It is then Christ for the christian to live, in the first place, because his spiritual state is owing entirely to his connection with Christ. He lives only *by* and *in* Him. As Christ himself says: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

The *origin* of spiritual life is by coming to Christ. Whatever may be said respecting the condition of a person who is religiously inclined, it is true of him that he has not begun to live in a spiritual sense, until he is regenerated; and his regeneration consists in his heart being drawn out in faith and love to Christ. Christ is the *Light* of the world; the Bible therefore represents such a person, previous to his coming into the spiritual knowledge of Christ, and embracing Him heartily, as in the *darkness* of nature—of his natural state. Christ is the *Life* of the world; and he, therefore, who has not come into Christ, by believing on Him, is described as being "dead in trespasses and sins." He may be penetrated deeply with the view and feeling of his guilt; he may be greatly alarmed lest he shall lose his soul; he may be anxiously seeking for some way of salvation; but so long as he keeps away from Christ, and fails to close in with the offers of mercy that are made in Him, so long he

remains in a spiritually lifeless state. His soul has not yet inhaled one breath of true life. He may have action and motion, but he needs to be “born again” by the Holy Spirit—born into Christ, the soul’s life, before he can be said to live, in the true spiritual sense.

And as the *origin* of spiritual life is solely *from* Christ, and consists in receiving Him by faith and love, and breathing His spirit, so is this life *sustained* and *increased* by continuing *in* Him, and growing more and more into Him. Hence the direction, “Abide in me, and I in you.” And if we abide in Him, He will abide in us also. If we make Him the centre and source of our hopes, He will at the same time be formed in us the hope of glory. The two things are correlative. The one implies the other; indeed, they may be regarded as but different forms of expressing the same thing. Likewise, we are exhorted to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ;” that is, by the help of the grace which God vouchsafes to us, we are to grow more and more into the knowledge and experience of Christ, or of the life that is in Him. The nature of this experience is well delineated by the apostle Paul in these words: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” This, as well as our text, appears to have been a testimony which he gave of his experience, when he was far advanced in his christian course, and indicates a high state of spiritual attainment. On another occasion, he said—and so unfolded the whole truth on which we are treating,—“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.”

It is evident, therefore, that without Christ there is *no* spiritual life; that every christian lives *by* and *in* Him; and that the degree of any one’s piety is measured by the degree in which he

lives and abides in Christ, and in which Christ lives and abides in him.

But it may be observed further, in this connection, that it is Christ for the christian to live, because he represents, and (so to speak) exhibits, Christ, in all the traits of his christian character. By the process of believing and loving, he is all the time becoming more and more assimilated to Christ. Christ's image is more and more enstamped upon him. Christ's nature, I may say, in a certain qualified sense, becomes *his* nature in an increasing degree. The Spirit of Christ continually works in him to produce this effect. Thus it is, that the christian comes to be one with Christ in interest and feeling. This is that unity of which the Savior himself so beautifully and so tenderly speaks, in his intercessory prayer. It is like that which runs through and binds together the members of one happy family; only dearer and closer. It is such as subsists between those who are joined together in the conjugal relation, and hence the church is called the bride of Christ. It is like that which pervades the different parts of the same body; and so by a favorite figure of the apostle, the church is represented as the body of Christ. He is called the Head, as the prime agency, the controlling part of the whole system; and christians, the members of His body, as those who develop His mind and will. He — still to vary the figure a little — is the *soul-principle*; they are the outward exhibition of that principle. They are His witnesses — His representatives. In all the manifestations which they make, therefore, of their peculiar christian character, they show forth *Christ* before the world. Every trait, every quality which they thus exhibit, is a trait, a quality of Christ. Every plan which they thus devise, and every act which they thus perform, are types of Christ. Alas, that there should be so much imperfection, and distortion, and commingling of evil with good, in the representations that are made! But still Christ owns these representations, defective as they are, as His. At least, He owns them so far as they are true to Him, and to the principles of His gospel. The qualities exhibited, so far as they are Christ-like, are certainly not of christians

themselves, for there is nothing in them by nature that could produce such effects. They show Him living and working through His own chosen instruments.

From this thought, I proceed to say yet further, it is Christ for the christian to live, because it is his great aim and endeavor to serve and honor Christ. He does not merely exhibit the character of Christ, as a mirror reflects the image of him who stands before it; but it is his direct and earnest purpose and effort to please and glorify Him, by obeying His precepts, imitating His example, and suffering His will, even so that he glories in his infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon him. He has consecrated his body and soul to Him. He has deliberately and cheerfully devoted his whole life, his entire existence to Christ. All his interests he holds as subordinate to those of his Lord and Master. He lives no more *by* Him, and *in* Him, than *for* Him. While he feels it to be his duty and his privilege to exert himself vigorously, in the improvement of such opportunities as are afforded him, for promulgating the gospel of Christ, in laboring for the conversion of the impenitent, the edification of the saints, and the enlargement and establishment in every way of visible Christianity,—while, to this end, whenever he is in a lively state, he feels prompted to employ his best energies and use all his influence, yet he considers it alike his duty and privilege to regulate his minutest temporal concerns on the same principle: whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, to do all to his Savior's glory. And this, of course, implies that he guards most strenuously against every thing in act or motive, that would have a contrary effect. It being, then, the all-controlling principle of his life, thus to serve and to glorify Christ; this being the one object that absorbs all his thoughts and energies, and for which alone he has any desire to live, it is very clear that Christ is identified with him, and that all he does has the mark of Christ upon it, and, in a sense, the vitality of Christ in it.

Who will then say that any christian can outlive his usefulness; who will say that the most aged and infirm of the saints on earth — at least, so long as there is any power to manifest

the living Christ that is in him — is no longer to be desired, as an earthly friend and companion, or an object of willing care, of respect, of love, of admiration even? Jealously should we guard these precious jewels of the Lord, which He may be pleased to loan us beyond a calculated time. Be it that they are marred somewhat to our vision. One wiser than we may have permitted this, that some new phase of Divine glory may be reflected on us through this medium, before He takes the jewel to Himself, to perfect it, and set it in His own crown. It is worth cherishing till the last moment that God can spare it to us.

O, there is great preciousness and power in the thought, that Christ should be, and is often, to the christian, such a living and active principle, to the end of his earthly course! This is the richest, noblest life that man can live. It is only to be regretted that most professed christians do not more vividly and more extensively evince this truth. It is fraught with blessedness, surely, to those who realize it in their own experience. For Christ is the very sum and substance of all bliss to guilty man; and they, in and over whom He rules, must have an earnest of heaven below.

2. But it is time that we pass to consider the second part of our subject: That it is gain for the christian to die.

It is indeed so, since dying cannot separate him from Christ; for "I am persuaded that death shall not be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "I am the resurrection and the life," said Jesus; "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

But death is gain to the believer, not only because Christ still lives in him, and he in Christ; but for these additional reasons:

He is thus introduced into a state in which he can know more of Christ and of His truth, than he ever could know in the flesh. We believe that he is ushered immediately into his Savior's presence. — "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Then will the disembodied saint "see his Savior" as He is, and know Him even as also he is known. Oh, what ravishing views must then break upon his vision!

"In vain our fancy strives to paint
The moment after death—
The glories that surround the saint,
When he resigns his breath."

"One gentle sigh his fetters breaks ;
We scarce can say, ' He's gone,'
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the throne."

"Faith strives, but all its efforts fail,
To trace her heaven-ward flight :
No eye can pierce within the veil,
Which hides that world of light."

It was in anticipation, we may believe, of such a view as this, that the Psalmist said, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness ; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." At least, this language is well adapted to express the longings which the christian has to see and know his Savior perfectly.

2 Death also brings the christian into a condition in which he can better serve Christ than he can in this world. It is not important that we should know precisely what service is required of, and rendered by, departed saints. But that they are active in doing the will of God, we infer from the nature of the human spirit ; and the Bible relieves us of all doubts, that we might otherwise have, on this subject ; for it plainly declares, that those who have washed their robes, and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb, are before the throne of God, and *serve* him day and night in his temple. Were this service only the rendering of homage and praise for their redemption, how glorious would it be to be thus employed ; with the vast company that surround the throne of God ! But we may believe that they are sent on errands of love to the inhabitants of this or other worlds. Without pressing our speculations, however, it is enough for us now to know that they do serve him in such ways as are most pleasing to him. They have delighted to be thus engaged here ; but much more will they rejoice to be so employed, after they have left this world. For then they will

be no more subject to clogs and imperfections. Their frail bodies, and all the human infirmities that have kept them in this world from faithfully performing the will of God, will no more be hindrances to them. And like a bird let loose from its cage, they will fly in the midst of heaven with grateful songs, and from thence to the farthest bounds whither the Lord may send them, to fulfil his good pleasure.

(3) But, further, death is inestimable gain to the christian, for it delivers him from all his doubts and fears—from all temptation and sin. These, above all other things, not only prevent his serving God as he otherwise would, but they mar essentially his happiness, and his communion with his God and Savior. Oh, it must be an exceedingly joyful day, when he obtains his release from all these impediments, and can satiate the enlarged desires and capacities of his sanctified soul with the fullness of heavenly bliss!

(4) And what gain, too, is it to the christian, that he is permitted thus to enjoy the infinite and everlasting reward, which his heavenly Father will bestow upon him, in the society of all the good, including those whom he has most loved on earth. That reward is inconceivable by us, in our present state. At best, we have but intimations and earnestings of it. But rich as the full realization will be, it is not to be enjoyed by each christian alone. There must be union and communion. The happiness of the redeemed will, no doubt, consist, in a great degree, in their being together, becoming familiar with each other's history, joining in worship and in service, and rejoicing in each other's joy. Must it not add immeasurably to our bliss, if we are so happy at death as to be admitted through the heavenly portals, to meet with the patriarchs, the prophets, and the apostles, of whom we have read and thought so much? Must it not exceedingly enhance our joy, to be on the most familiar terms with them, in the review of the past, the experience of the present, and the anticipation of the future? To meet again, and be united under such circumstances with beloved christian friends and relatives, some of whom went before, and others came after us, to the realms of light; and there to form the

acquaintance of one and another, as christians, whom we left on earth in impenitence, as well as of multitudes whom we never knew in the flesh, — will not this be a source of ineffable delight to us? If thus it will be with us, so will it be with others. And so we have reason to believe it has already been with many disciples of Christ, who have finished their earthly course, and been summoned by death away.

(5) But, most of all, the bliss of heaven will consist in the christian's meeting with the Savior, enjoying His presence, and sharing his glory. This is his great reward and crown. Heaven would not be heaven, unless the *Savior* were there, to bestow His favors upon his elect disciples: Hence his prayer, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." It was the prospect of this that cheered and comforted the apostle, and made him desire death rather than life; "to be with Christ, which is far better." And it was this to which the sweet psalmist of Israel had reference, when he said: "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore."

Happy, then, are all those, who, after a life devoted to Christ, are by death transported to that blessed world! In full view of what awaits them, we wonder not that they should be willing to leave, yea, be earnestly desirous of leaving, all that has been dear to them here below, that they may come to their rest and home in the bosom of their Savior. And who would, if he could, detain them from the fulfilment of their desire, one day, one hour, one moment, after the appointed time of their departure? Rather, we would bid them an affectionate "farewell," and "God speed;" and hope to meet them soon.

The truths to which I have given utterance, my hearers, find, I believe, a vivid illustration in the life and death of the beloved sister who has but lately left us. A few facts pertaining to her history, may serve to show this:

Mrs. Martha Lee—or Aunt Lee, as we have been accustomed to call her — was born Sept. 26, 1778. Some of her ancestors,

in the direct line, for several generations, were distinguished for their piety ; and she, no doubt, inherited largely the benefits of their godly influence and their prayers. Her parents were not professors of religion ; but her father, for many years before his death, entertained the christian hope, and was in the habit of observing family prayer, and asking a blessing at table. Her mother, also, it is believed, became a christian, after she was seventy years old. Both of her parents possessed great energy of character ; and they were particularly active in the scenes of the Revolution. Like them, she was naturally very vivacious and energetic.

I am not aware that there was anything in her childhood and very early youth, that was so peculiarly remarkable as to need a notice here.

In her nineteenth year, during a revival of religion, she was brought to deep conviction of her sinfulness and alienation from God. When the revival commenced, she was absent from town. On returning home, and becoming acquainted with the existing state of things, she was at first disposed to be somewhat light and trivial about the events that were transpiring, and her own spiritual condition. This, however, soon gave place to deep anxiety for the welfare of her immortal soul. For a considerable time she continued in this state, but was at length enabled, as she hoped, to yield her heart to God. A season of depression soon followed, from which she was relieved by obtaining clearer views of the way of salvation, and putting her trust more confidently in the Savior. The manner in which this change was effected, is worthy of notice. While she was meditating upon her own state with much despondency, this answer to the question in the Assembly's catechism, "What is effectual calling?" occurred to her: "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel." She saw the adaptation of these precious gospel provisions to her need, and from that day and hour of spiritual illumination and strength,

till the close of her life, she was the same open, decided, ardent, devoted christian.

Her earthly attachments were strong, but they all yielded to those which bound her to her Savior. Not long after this period, she emphatically declared to the most endeared friend she had on earth—not knowing then but the declaration would cause a disruption of the friendship and union which subsisted between them—“Much as I love you, I love the Savior more!” She made a public profession of religion on the 7th of November, 1798.

The pre-eminent affection for Christ of which I have spoken, she carried with her everywhere, and manifested in all her actions. It was a perennial fountain, ever sending forth streams to bless all about her. Nothing delighted her more than to be employed in the service of her Master; nothing half so much. No greater favor could be bestowed upon her, than to indicate in what new way she might please and honor him. But there were few, if any, quicker than herself to perceive how this could be done. She saw it as by intuition; and no sooner saw than acted.

In loving Christ thus ardently, she loved whatever she knew and felt to be dear to him. For his *ministers*, because of their office, and for their work's sake, she cherished a peculiar friendship. They were to her the representatives of her Lord; the ambassadors of Christ, sent to negotiate for the pardon, peace, and salvation of the lost. She felt that they were charged with weighty and solemn responsibilities. She would do everything that she could, to lighten their arduous labors, and comfort them in their trials. She always rejoiced to witness or to hear of their prosperity, and the success of their mission. She was as a ministering angel to the successive pastors who have labored here, of whom the speaker—though the least of all in every other respect—feels himself the most honored, in that he has been permitted to receive from her the testimony of her love for, and devotion to them all; to hear her last counsels; to speak to her sweet words of consolation and of promise, which God had given for her support in the days of weakness and of

pain, during which she was fast ripening for heaven ; to hear her raptures of praise ; and, in accordance with her own oft-expressed and earnest desire, to stand by her side in the last hour of mortal conflict, to commit the departing spirit to her Savior, to catch the smile of triumph as the victory was won, and then to follow the precious remains to the peaceful grave, where, with those of her husband, they wait the glorious resurrection.

My limits will scarcely allow me to begin to do justice to the point on which I am speaking, and represent this trait of hers in its true light. I can do little more than indicate it in general terms. But there is a record on high of her ministrations to each and all of these pastors, in connection with the various circumstances of their labor here. "He that receiveth you," saith Christ, "receiveth me ; and he that receiveth me, receiveth Him that sent me." Aye, there is a record too in the hearts of the pastors who still survive, that can never be erased.

It is almost painful to repress the detail of facts, illustrative of my present position, upon which the want of time forbids me to enter ; yet, your acquaintance with these facts is such, that even this allusion to them may be sufficient for the present purpose. This much, however, in addition, I may say, that she desired her sentiments on this subject might be proclaimed from her grave ; and therefore selected and suggested, as an appropriate epitaph, to be inscribed on her tombstone, this passage of Scripture, containing the dying legacy of her Lord. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

Our departed sister cherished also a very strong affection for the church and its ordinances. Nothing could be more expressive of the sentiments of her heart in this regard, than the language of the hymn we often sing :

"I love thy Kingdom, Lord,
The house of thine abode ;
The Church our blest Redeemer saved
With his own precious blood."

"I love thy Church, O God !
Her walls before thee stand,
Dear as the apple of thine eye,
And graven on thine hand."

“For her my tears shall fall ;
 For her my prayers ascend :
 To her my cares and toils be given,
 Till toils and cares shall end.”

“Beyond my highest joy,
 I prize her heavenly ways ;
 Her sweet communion—solemn vows,
 Her hymns of love and praise.”

She loved the church as an institution of her covenant-keeping God. She loved its members. Each one was to her a dear brother or sister in Christ. Her sympathies were always warm and flowing towards the whole christian family ; and particularly, towards those with whom God, in His providence, had directly associated her. This Church, and you, dear brethern and sisters, she bore upon her heart, as the high-priest of Israel his breast-plate. Intense was her desire that we all, and every professed child of God, should walk daily and constantly in the light of her Savior’s countenance ; and nothing could grieve her more than to hear of any defection or coldness on the part of any who had named the name of Christ. Whenever she was apprized of a quickening among the dear people of God,—when she learned that the meetings were well attended, and the divine presence was especially manifested in them, then her heart throbbed with livelier joy and gratitude, than common. When little children were brought to the baptismal font, and there consecrated to God ; when new converts publicly professed their faith in Jesus ; and whenever the Sabbath came to call the flock of God to His sanctuary — especially the communion sabbath — she had a day of jubilee. It was much the same, whether she was able herself to go to the house of God, and there mingle in these scenes, or was confined by sickness, or the infirmities of age, to her dwelling. How often has the preacher, after discoursing on the everlasting verities revealed in this precious volume — and, especially, after proclaiming the peculiar truths of the gospel — expatiating on the glories of Christ, his atonement, and his kingdom, — how often, I say,

after thus discoursing, has he been saluted with her responses of love, ere he reached her pew ; and there, with the earnest grasp ; while, to his great encouragement, she would express to him the delight with which she had listened to the communications he had made. Then, all the way down the aisle, even to the vestibule, and beyond, she would tell how her soul had been ravished by the love of Jesus, as in imagination she had followed Him from the scenes of his labor ; from the busy and thronged city of Jerusalem to the vale of Gethsemane ; seeing Him, as it were, when those cruel soldiers laid their hands upon Him, and bore Him away to the Judgment Hall ; witnessing the insults that were there heaped upon Him ; hearing his condemnation ; beholding Him with the bloody crown and heavy cross, toiling up the hill Calvary, and there, amid the taunts of his enemies, crucified ; thence taken to Joseph's tomb, bursting then the bands of death, and ere long rising to his throne on high ! Did not our heart burn within us, while she talked with us by the way, and while she opened to us her experience of scripture truth ?

I might speak here, also, of her interest in the Sabbath-school, (of which she was a member and a teacher, from its formation until after she was seventy years of age,) and in all other organized measures in which the energies of the church were enlisted for the welfare and enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom. There could not be found a warmer friend to these enterprises than she.*

Her earnest desires and efforts for the conversion of the impenitent, were another remarkable development of her christian life. It was in this way, perhaps, more than almost any other, that her singular piety manifested itself. As soon as she had herself entered the kingdom of God, she had a great desire that others should be brought in. Realizing as she did the value of the soul, and burning with love to that Saviour, who

*Mrs. Lee was the principal agent in forming and sustaining the first Tract, Missionary, and Maternal societies in this town. The Missionary Society was organized as early as 1815, and its meetings were held *monthly*. It was one of the germs of the general monthly Missionary Concert which is now observed by Christians throughout the world.

had delivered her from the pains of hell, she felt that she could not but endeavor by all means to persuade others to lay down their weapons of rebellion, and become reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. She was prompt in improving favorable opportunities, and even such as would seem to others of less piety and zeal *un-favorable* opportunities for conversing with those whom she met, and who, she had no reason to believe, had made their peace with God. She not only did this when they were brought in her way, but she was accustomed frequently to go out on errands of love, seeking the lost, and endeavoring instrumentally to save them. Even those who were very much hardened in sin, when they found themselves in her society, expected to be addressed upon the subject of their salvation. When any were known to be anxious for their spiritual welfare, she took great delight in directing them in the way of pardon and peace. Peculiarly active was she, as some of my older hearers will remember, in efforts of this kind, during the revivals that occurred under the ministries of Rev. Messrs. Thurston, Emerson, and Taylor, all of whom went before her to glory. It is believed that in the last great day it will appear that many in those seasons, through her counsels and fidelity, were brought to the saving knowledge of Christ. Nor were her labors for the conversion of the impenitent confined to her own town's-people. But when she went abroad, in the stage-coach, or wherever she was, she sought to win fresh trophies of grace to her Redeemer.

Another remarkable characteristic, was her love to the Bible, and the Hymn-Book. These she read and pondered constantly, until she could quote from them to an unlimited extent, and with great accuracy. I speak now, more especially, of her better days,—before the infirmities of the last years had greatly impaired her memory; although she showed the same attachment to them to the end. The Bible was indeed to her, what it ought to be to every one, the Book of books; and the Hymn book was next to it. In these, she found treasures of knowledge, and wisdom, from which she drew the counsel and direction that she felt she needed for her own soul; and fur-

nished herself with material to do good to others. O how often we have seen her with these books before her, drinking in their life-giving truths! How often we have seen her take them, clasp them in her hands, press them to her bosom, exclaiming, “*O, precious, precious Books!*” A stranger even could not look over their pages, and observe the marks she has made, and the sentiments she has written thereon, without being convinced that an uncommonly thoughtful and devout christian had possessed them.* An acquaintance or friend, who had learned the intrinsic value of such books, might well prize these copies, beyond others richly bound, and never marred by use.

The *prayerfulness* of our departed sister, was another of her remarkable qualities. There have been few, probably, equal to her in this respect. Prayer was far from being, to her, a mere form. It was a vital reality. She prayed, because she loved to pray,—because she had sweet communion with her God and Savior,—because she had wants to be satisfied, and she expected them to be satisfied. Often she prayed for a long time, becoming absorbed in the exercise. For others, as well as for herself, she thus prayed, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. Many doubtless have been prayed by her from sickness to health, from peril on the land or on the sea to safety, from moral death to spiritual life! She delighted, not only in secret, but also in social prayer. Therefore she had a great fondness for the prayer meetings, that were held statedly or occasionally.† The crowning blessing which she enjoyed, in her interviews with ministers and other christian friends who visited her, was the prayer offered, sometimes without, but often at her own earnest request.

*The 444th Select Hymn, (Watts’ and Select,) commencing:

“When bending o’er the brink of life,
My trembling Soul shall stand;”

was one of Mrs. L’s favorite hymns. She was accustomed to read it often. She read it aloud, and with great emotion, on the last Sabbath of her life. On the margin is pencilled, “my dear hymn, very sweet one.” This was probably the last sentence she ever wrote.

† The first female prayer meeting in this town may be said to have originated with her. It was held at her house during the most of the time for forty years.

Our beloved friend was distinguished for her *christian benevolence*. "God is love." Christ was the embodiment of Divine love. The spirit of Christ dwelt in her, and was constantly diffusing itself in thoughts and words and acts of kindness. She was a friend at hand, to sympathize with and aid the sick, the sorrowing, the needy, wherever she found them. She was abundant in her smaller charities. No object of true benevolence plead in vain at her door. No sufferer was sent empty away. As for her larger charities, *yonder building** and her bequests bespeak them. In truth, all her possessions with herself, she gave to Christ, and only desired so to dispense them as that they should be used most to his glory.

The last item that I shall particularly mention, descriptive of our departed sister's piety, is, her *fond anticipations of heaven*. Ever since I knew her, (you know better than I, what she was before,) she has seemed to live, I had almost said, *more* in heaven than on earth. Heaven, her Father's throne, her Savior's kingdom, the home of her deceased christian friends, her own everlasting home, the rest, the great family meeting-place, with its many mansions, where all the people of God will at length be gathered,—was the almost constant subject of her thoughts and conversation. Meet her where or when you might, this was her favorite theme. How many times, with both hands upraised, and her whole frame quivering with emotion, has she declared to us, in the most emphatic terms,—“I am going soon. I am rejoiced to go. I would die to-day,—yes, this moment,” &c. She seemed to be every day in the position in which we may imagine the Psalmist was, when he said, “O that I had wings like a dove, for then I would flee away and be at rest.” I have often thought that she could hardly say, “What I shall choose I wot not.” “I am in a strait betwixt two.” In visiting her, I have almost invariably found her with her wings so plumed for flight from earth, that I have felt in

* The Parsonage, given by Mrs. Sarah Allen (deceased,) and Mrs. Lee, to “the Orthodox Congregational Church,” in Manchester, towards which Mrs. Lee contributed 1200 dollars.

duty bound, to try to reconcile her to stay a little longer here, until it should be evident that the time of her departure had fully come. And when reminded that she ought not to be anxious to depart before her Lord should call, but be willing to remain as long as it should please Him, O! how sweetly and promptly has she given her assent, and submitted to the will of her Lord, quietly to wait his time, immediately changing the subject of conversation. Yet soon again her thoughts would be upon her home,—how could she help it? The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. Ah! dear sister, God *was* calling thee then. Thy Savior was coming to bear thee hence. Thou didst hear his summons. Thou thoughtest Him a little nearer than he was. But He was on His way. He was calling thee to get ready; though not just then to go. And thou didst, like a true servant, make thyself ready, and watch for his appearing. Thou stoodest, gazing upward, as it were, thy heart meanwhile saying,

“O if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul would stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless through death’s iron gate,
Nor feel the terrors as she passed.”

And when he came, with a chariot prepared, He took thee triumphantly to the region of the blest! “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Much more, dear friends, I have in my heart, to say, respecting this long-known and honored mother in Israel: but time and strength forbid.

Let me add in conclusion, blessed is our privilege to have known her! Blessed to cherish the remembrance of her godly life! Who can doubt that for her to live was Christ, and to die was gain? Who of us can refrain from saying, “Let me

die the death of the righteous ; and let my last end be like hers ?”

Beloved, now that she has left us, upon whom is her mantle to fall ? Why not upon us all ?

Let this day, in connection with the feast which we are about to observe in commemoration of His dying love, witness the renewal of our consecration to Christ, and devotion to His service. Amen.



